information; participation in various specialized fairs and exhibitions/ buyer—seller meets, exchange of delegations; promotion and encouragement of direct business level contacts; promotion of counter-trade, consignment exports and creation/leasing of warehouses and promotion of joint ventures and mutual investments. In the case of CIS countries, trade agreements have been signed with all the CIS countries. Further, to expand trade with these countries the Government has initiated several measures which *inter alia* include regular review of trade issues through Joint Commission, etc. broad basing the basket of tradable goods and evolving instrumental mechanism for banking and credit insurance, etc. A focus CIS Programme is also proposed to be launched in the coming year.

Decline in price of Coffee

2386. SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that due to heavy decline in prices of coffee, the Indian coffee plantation sector is losing approximately rupees 2000 crores;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry through Coffee Board to bring back stability in coffee prices;

(c) whether Government have held discussions with coffee planters[7] promoters in this regard; and

(d) if so, the groups with which Government had discussions recently and the outcome of the meetings?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) Coffee in India is an export-oriented commodity. Due to low coffee price* prevailing in the global markets, the value realisation from export of coffee has declined in recent times. During 2000-2001 the foreign exchange earning from coffee exports arc

expected to be to the tunc ot Rs. 1000 crores against the value realisation of Rs. 1376[7]- crores during 2000-01.

(b) With the liberalisation of coffee industry, the trade is in the private hands and the prices of coffee arc determined by the market forces of demand and supply. However for the benefit of coffee growers, the Govt, of India through Coffee Board has been operating several plan schemes under which various types of financial technical and marketing assistance are provided to the growers. Further thrust is being given for increasing productivity of coffee particularly in small grower sector and improving quality of the product to achieve competitiveness in the international market. The Board is also encouraging large growers to produce speciality coffee which fetches attractive premium in the developed countries. All these steps arc expected to stabilize the prices in the long run and ensure remunerative return to the growers.

In addition, at the behest of Government of India, the commercial banks have rescheduled the crop loans of small coffee growers and are also extend fresh capital loans.to them. The Board has also implemented an interest relief scheme during 2001-02, which provided 5% interest relief to targetted small coffee growers on working capital loans availed of by them from the Banks. The Government of India has also approved a scheme for implementation by the board during 2001-02 under which financial assistance @ Rs. 500 per tonne has been provided to Indian Coffee exports for reducing thcir,, transportation and handling costs.

Coffee Board is also implementing a medium-term export stragedy to sustain and gain market share in the key markets and also to improve the competitiveness of Indian Coffee in the global markets over the next few years.

(c) and (d) To evolve suitable relief measures for the coffee growers, the Government of India/Coffee Board has held scries of discussions/meeting with coffee growers/cxporters/curers associations besides banking sector. The issues arc also discussed regularly in the meetings of the Coffee Board, which is represented by all segments of coffee industry. As a result of the discussions, various steps for the

benefit of coffee growers such as rcschcdulcmcnt of loans, implementation of interest relief scheme, transportation subsidy scheme etc. have been introduced by the Government.

Expert Committee on SEZs

2387. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an Expert Committee has submitted a report proposing separate legislation for Special Economic Zones;

(b) if so, the details thereof togcthcrwith the text of the proposed legislation;

(c) by when, the legislation is likely to be put in place; and

(d) whether any specific proposals have been made by the Committee for boosting the country's exports and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Action has already been initiated to prepare draft of the legislation.

(c) It is difficult to indicate a time frame for the legislation since several department would have to be involved.

(d) Yes, Sir. The Committee has recommended the continuation of duty neutralization schemes with appropriate modification, encouraging export of agriculture products and simplification of procedure.

Trade relation with Nepal

2388. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Nepal unhappy with trade pact" which appeared in the Statesman dated the 21st March, 2002;